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Western Reserve and Northern Ohio
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

TRACT No. 34—NOVEMBER, 1876.

THE MARGRY PAPERS.

VOLUME ONE.

By C. C. BALDWIN.

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Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique, Septentrionale, 1614-1754.

Mémoires et Documents Originaux recueillis et publiés par Pierre Margry, Première partie, 1614-1684. Paris, 1875.

The great West was, until a comparatively late period, under the dominion of France. Frenchmen made the first discoveries. Many years ago they made settlements, traded, and occupied the country until, with the capture of Quebec in 1760, all the Western posts were surrendered to Great Britain. It is then to France that we must look for its early history. It is only within a few years that extensive researches have been made in that country. The State of New York expended a very large sum to publish in eleven immense quarto volumes documents of especial interest in that State. For the history of New England, New Jersey, and Louisiana other investigations have been made. A quiet gentleman of Paris, M. Pierre Margry, long connected with the Department of the Marine, has devoted many years to gathering what would illustrate the foreign history of France, especially in America. He has already rendered this country great service in the investigations already referred to. His manuscripts, yet unpublished, were carefully collected from all parts of France and are unique. The knowledge of these treasures could not but make their publication much desired. Were it not for the "Boston fire" this would have been done by private hands, but that conflagration destroying such hopes. Congress came to the rescue and appropriated a sum, not too large, in the purchase of copies to encourage the publication of such portions as relate to our own country.

This plan of publication originated with the Historical Society at Cleveland and was warmly seconded by Mr. Parkman and by other societies and historical scholars throughout the country.

The first of the nine volumes is indeed full of interest. The materials for the early French history in this country are in some respects very full and in others very scanty. The Jesuits were powerful in the New World and their Relations were regularly transmitted to the mother country. But the Jesuits were not all the colony nor were all the discoveries made under their auspices, though they apparently desired that it should be so. La Salle was the first discoverer of the Ohio, the first to trace the Mississippi to the sea. The French rested their claim to the great West mainly upon these facts, and to-day his portrait adorns the Capitol at Washington as one of the four great discoverers of America. But he is hardly mentioned in these Relations. M. Margry has done more than any other to recover the history of La Salle. The handsome volume before us is ornamented with his portrait as he appeared in his younger days, with long curls and the dress of a man of the world. There is, however, a determination in the face and a restless, dreamy look to the eyes as if the portrait was not an unlikely one for the man who, in spite of the opposition of all, could penetrate alone vast countries, could give his fortune to discovery, and persist with such force of will that he should be slain by his own men in a pathless wilderness, thousands of miles from even the settlements of his own countrymen in the Western world.

The earlier papers in the volume relate to the Recollets—the "first missionaries of the West and South, in North America." They

were professedly poor and plain. They hastened to the new land and established a convent at Quebec and posts at other places. The Jesuits came over after, partly on their invitation, and in the end very decidedly turned them out of Canada. The second, and larger paper, is a memoir desiring relief for them from the obstacles placed in their way by the Jesuits, and the Government of Canada controlled by that order. There seems to have been danger that in a few years there would not be a Recollet in Canada. This strife between the religious sects deserves a paper of its own. The Jesuits, at first, certainly very devout and self-sacrificing men, and sometimes martyrs, were too devoted to the success of their order, and the Colonial Government was hampered by them. The Government at home opposed them secretly and not openly. Recollets were meant to be encouraged to offset them The Count de Frontenac in his letters wrote earnestly against them in cipher, praising them in other parts of the same letter which might fall under their eyes. In a later paper from him in this volume are presented his views with much earnestness and in plain French. He sketches their power and possessions, their hostility to the Recollets, and accuses them of a want of fidelity to the King. "This general animosity against all the most faithful servants of the King shows well enough their designs." "They would not allow the Recollets," says he, "to hear confession or administer sacrament." He had charged them in a previous letter with caring more for beavers than for souls. "They had opposed," says Frontenac, "the sale of brandy to the Indians, without which the fur trade could not be successful and now even opposed the sale of wine, to place a new yoke on the people." It was common knowledge that they took directly or indirectly the management of everything, and used for that purpose a powerful espionage. They did not teach the Indians French lest they should become friends of the civil power. A vocabulary for Indian use defined equal "the Black Robe (Jesuit priest) is equal to Onontio (Indian name for the Governor of Canada)." They told other savages that they were the masters of Onontio. And in truth they do not seem in saying that to have very violently stretched the truth

Two papers present a lively picture of the commercial strife with the Dutch for the trade of the Indians. The Iroquois had killed the beaver south of the lakes and were getting them from the North and Northwest and selling them at Albany and at better prices than the French had paid. The whole volume shows the projects for extension of Western and Southern trade by the unknown river Ohio and the unknown river Mississippi, even to the "Mer Vermeio," Gulf of California, and in other directions. Such were the motives held forth to the King for such expeditions as were made by La Salle, though La Salle himself seems to have been actuated by an innate love of adventure and discovery such as very few men have ever had.

Page 170, Lake Erie is mentioned in 1671 as called by the savages "Techaronkion."

Temperance men will find in the volume an interesting discussion concerning the sale of brandy to the Indians, and the views of various persons are presented much in the manner of witnesses in a Congressional commission, with the usual diversity of opinion.

There appear the "Details of the voyage of Louis Jolliet," who visited in 1673 the Mississippi, having departed from Quebec by order of Frontenac to discover the South Sea. His map is mentioned, which we hope M. Margry will publish.

The interest of the volume centers in La Salle. Although in a very early day he discovered the Ohio, but little has been known, or in fact is now, of the particulars. I purposely omit discussion of this journey. In this volume appears much history of La Salle, his plans, expenses, drafts upon his family and friends, how he built upon Lake Ontario and planned to build upon Lake Erie and further west; how he built on the Niagara river, on the river St. Joseph in the southwest part of Michigan, and away within the wilds of Illinois, among the tribe of that name, the fourth fort, Crevecoeur. An interesting memoir is that of a friend of the Abbe de Gallinée relating, from the information of La Salle himself, the particulars of his journey with the Abbe, including accounts of the Indian tribes and their manners. In 1669 Gallinée, Dollier, and La Salle left Montreal to seek the Ohio known by report. They turned toward its source, but the Iroquois dissuaded the two priests from the journey, much to the dissatisfaction of La Salle, and the party turned to the north of Lake Erie. The report of Abbe Gallinée of this journey is also in this volume. From it we extract but a single word, Paouitikoungraentaouak, the Algonkin name for the Chippeways. The feelings of La Salle were with the Recollets. They were first; the Jesuits came after (says the memoir), and the Recollets gave them half their house. The Jesuits shortly got the other half and the Recollets had hard work to get it back. The Jesuits were established in Quebec, "where they are absolute masters" L'Evesque (the Governor) was their creature

and would do nothing without them. La Salle complains that the Jesuits sought to control trade. One Indian said that "when the Black Robes were among us we worshipped God, but when there were no more beavers we see them no more." The Jesuits disliked La Salle very much. Frontenac in this volume (page 323) says "their design, as it appeared in the end, was to set a trap whichever path I took, or to derange everything, to place the country in disorder from which they would not hesitate to profit, and to ruin M. de la Salle." "He has become the object of their envy and aversion." This enmity was no doubt much prompted by their pious zeal. They had made discoveries. Their map of Lake Superior of 1671 was almost wonderful They were searching for the Mississippi ,and their schemes of power, wealth, and dominion, for their order in the great valley of North America, may have been as grand and magnificent as those of La Salle for his King.

The paper lets us into such lively views of the times as are not given in ordinary history, and we see how, after all, love of gain, love of power, and jealousy of others influenced history in such solitudes as would seem to be free from such disturbing elements if any freedom could be found.

The most valuable paper of the volume is called a "Relation of the Discoveries and Travels of Sir de la Salle, Lord and Governor of Fort Frontenac, beyond the great lakes of New France, made by order of M. Colbert, 1679–80–81." It is a narrative covering 150 pages of the events of those years, and probably the official report made after the return of La Salle to Montreal. In 1677 La Salle was in France. He was already famous and of influence. His scheme was vast. He wanted to penetrate to the great valley of our continent and lay there the foundation of powerful colonies "in a country temperate in climate, rich and fertile, and capable of a grand commerce." Such hold of the continent would be taken that, at the next war with Spain, France could oust her in North America. In the commencement of 1679 he built the Griffin, the first vessel navigating Lake Erie, meeting some opposition from the Iroquois, but less because that nation was at war beyond Lake Erie. The early part of the story is well known from other sources, but the narrative of La Salle's travels after he left Fort Crevecoeur and parted with the expedition to the North has never been told so completely as here. We wish we could present the whole paper to our English readers, but we cannot follow in detail the straight, business-like story of adventure, travel, description of countries and Indian nations, contests, diplomacy, discouragements and perseverance. The Iroquois traveled from their homes in New York all through the West, and it was dangerous to take sides or not to. They were then fighting the Illinois and the Miamis. First living south of Lake Ontario, the best armed and most warlike tribe in America, they defeated and exterminated (says our memoir) all their neighbors. They bore their arms to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, to the North Sea, in Florida, and even beyond the river Mississippi. They have (says the writer) in thirty years destroyed over 600,000 lives, and made desert most of the country round the great lakes.

La Salle had expected the Griffin with supplies for his journey down the river. He never saw the vessel again. She was lost, he believed by treachery, and he must return for succor. Early in 1680 he reached St. Joseph. He found two men whom he had sent around the lake, but they did not find the Griffin. Arrived at length at Niagara, he found he had also lost a ship with supplies from France. He reached Montreal, May 6th, 1680 His creditors had seized his property and his resources seemed entirely wasted. On his return to Frontenac he learned by letter from Tonty that his men left at Crevecoeur had deserted after destroying the fort, carrying away what property they could and destroying the balance. They destroyed Fort St. Joseph and also seized La Salle's property at Niagara. He was not disheartened. He started to succor Tonty and save if he could the vessel building on the Illinois with which he meant to descend to the sea. November 4th, 1680, he reached the mouth of the St. Joseph. The Iroquois had fought the Illinois, and as he approached Crevecoeur there were only scenes of death and devastation. When he reached that post he found it silent; the planks of his vessel were there and on one of them was written, "Nous sommes tous savages ce 19 A—, 1680"—we are all savages. Was it prophetic that he had named the fort Crevecoeur (Broken Heart). The romantic interest of the relation is here at its height, but La Salle does not stop to dwell upon the picture. His first thought was, did the A mean Aout or Avril, August or April. He wished to find the faithful Tonty. Tonty's fate appears partly in this relation and partly his subsequent memoir in the volume. Not the Jesuits alone regarded La Salle with jealousy. The Iroquois were without reason fearful that the West tribes would be armed against them with arms and other assistance, and that the trade in the West would draw from

own profits with the Dutch and English. While Tonty was absent the desertion had taken place. After he returned he was captured by the Iroquois.

In May, 1681, after unsuccessful search and hard labors, building up Indian succors and strength, La Salle left the fort on the St. Joseph for Michilimackinac, where he found Tonty and Father Membré. They returned to Frontenac, and this paper is the relation to that time.

Of his new, wonderful resurrection of recourses and eventual success we do not speak, although a new and brief relation of it from information of his brother is also in this volume.

The resolute will and wonderful power of La Salle appear nowhere so strongly as in the narrative we have quoted. There seems almost a direct triumph of will over every opposition, of mind over matter. This is the fullest, most explicit and valuable account of this series of expeditions. By whom was it committed to writing? Evidently by some one fully informed and from notes made day by day, with dates as in a diary. This, as well as the expedition of 1682, wherein he descended the Mississippi, were made under the commission of 1678, wherein the King was graciously pleased to permit La Salle to discover these new lands provided he did it at his own expense. The official report of the last expedition was made by Father Zenobe Membré, a Recollet. See La Salle's memoir to Seignelay, in Falconer's Mississippi and Oregon, which leaves it almost doubtful whether La Salle did not mean to say that Membré wrote the official report of all his expeditions under the leave of 1678. Membré was with La Salle in the first one, and it seems probable that he drew this report. It ends with the embarkation of La Salle on Lake Ontario for Montreal, the last of August, 1681, and then adds the hope that the end of the year 1682 will find the discovery of the mouth of the Mississippi made.

Some parts of the report relating to those parts of the journey where Hennepin was present bear a striking resemblance to his first book, published in 1684. I translate, for instance, from page 440. The two reports are word for word the same, except where differences are marked, this report as 1 and Hennepin as 2.

comm The Sieur de La Salle could not build a trade que at Fort de Frontenac because of a the de age of two leagues at the great fall of ting there, without which one could sail in a and selling essel to Fort Frontenac to the bottom prices that (Illinois, 1) (Dauphin, 2) by the lakes volume si are with reason called fresh water

The great river of St. Lawrence takes its origin from several great lakes, among which are five of an extraordinary size, and which are badly laid down in the printed maps. These lakes are (1 Lake Superior, the Lake of the Illinois, the Lake of the Hurons, the Lake Erie, the Lake Frontenac); (2, the first Lake de Condé, or Tracy, second, Lake Dauphin or of the Illinois, the third, Lake of Orleans or of the Hurons, fourth, Lake de Conty or Erie, and fifth, Lake Ontario named de Frontenac.) They are all of fresh water and very good to drink, abounding in fish and surrounded by fertile lands. With the exception of the first, navigation is easy in summer even for large vessels, but difficult in winter because of the strong winds which blow there." I might continue the parallel at some length. The account of Hennepin's journey among the Sioux bears a similar verbal similarity. On page 478 of this volume appears the beginning of that part translated by Mr. Shea in his Discovery of the Mississippi, and continuing for four or five pages Hennepin, however, calls the Mississippi "Colbert" By very far the larger part of the report bears no resemblance to Hennepin. Hennepin was not above copying the report had he wished to do so for his book. Much of his second book was copied from the suppressed Le Clercq Still I cannot but think that those parts of the paper which have much resemblance to Hennepin bear his mark. His egotism and desire for prominence are apparent.

"The Father Louis Hennepin offered himself to make this journey" (to the Sioux,) "to commence acquaintance with nations among whom he had thought he would go soon to establish himself in preaching the faith."

Page 440. The carpenters are said to have been sent to Niagara under the charge of La Motte and Father Louis Hennepin. In other accounts it is said La Motte had charge.

Page 444. The carpenters would have been frightened away by the Senecas if La Salle and Father Louis had not taken pains to reassure them. There are examples of the vanity characteristic of Hennepin's book quickly noticed by anyone who has read Mr, Shea's excellent bibliographical sketch of that work. The differences are suggestive. In Hennepin the account is occasionally enlarged by introduction of other matter as it by afterthought. The forms of the names of the lakes bear the stamp of the wilderness Superior, of the Illinois, of the Hurons. Erie, in Hennepin called in compliment to Frenchmen, de Conde or Tracy, Dauphin, d'Orleans, de Conty.

Hennepin's own name is in this paper

Henpin, while La Salle in his letters calls him Hempin. Henpin was not unlikely the original, euphonised by speech into Hempin and by himself to the more musical Hennepin.

At the time this relation was made Hennepin had returned from his captivity, and he probably furnished his report in writing, used by his brother Recollet in a friendly spirit. He very likely met La Salle himself, who writes, in August, to a friend in France, that Hennepin was about to go to France; that he would not hesitate to exaggerate; "it is his character," and he speaks "nearer what he wishes than what he does." I doubt not the report of Hennepin was quite cut short in this paper; in fact, it so appears.

Following this relation is the recital from Nicholas de la Salle of the discovery of the mouth of our great river, in 1682, and the return to Quebec. Next is a general relation of the enterprises of La Salle from 1678 to 1683 made by Tonty, whose nickname, "Main de fer,"—hand of iron—reminds one of the knights of old while his heart was as stout and trusty as his hand—a real hand of iron, by the way, found by more than one Indian to give a very heavy blow. Tonty was successively commander at Niagara, Crevecoeur and Fort St. Louis, and descended the Mississippi with LaSalle. The contents of these 600 pages cannot be made known in a review. Their value consists mainly in the more complete variety and perfect knowledge which they give of these great enterprises of which we had some previous knowledge. Their apparent value increases by comparison with less authentic and particular accounts. LaSalle is by all means the most prominent figure in interior discovery. We have indicated how vast his plans. His life was romantic, his death tragic. In later times claims to large territories were made under his discoveries. The French claimed under that right even the Ohio and the forts at Pittsburg and Erie, wrested from them by the English. Still later the population, French by extraction, leaned to the United States in the Revolutionary war and made easy such occupation and control as gave the United States the Northwest Territory. In still later times, when our Northwestern boundary was disputed, La Salle's doings were discussed as if on them turned the fate of vast territory.

We say then that we feel under great obligation to M. Margry who, with patriotic care, has collected and preserved much valuable matter; and we were before this publication much indebted for the liberal use of his treasures he has permitted to Americans. While it has given the public a foretaste of his riches, it has stimulated that patriotic zeal which makes the student of history desire access to the original authorities, so that he can see for himself the original and life-like records of the times. The English reader cannot better estimate the value of this volume than to see how often in the Discovery of the Great West these unpublished treasures have been to Mr. Parkman his best and frequently his only guide. The early maps which accompany these and other relations have not been yet published We hope M. Margry may be able to furnish them. Some of the early manuscript maps are vastly in advance of those published. On seeing them, one has a profound respect for the discoverers, somewhat, it must be confessed, at the expense of the early geographers.

Some of the best and clearest evidences of what was done and known, arises from the maps.

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